



April 8, 2003

## **Pew Hispanic Center**

A project of the University of Southern California  
Annenberg School for Communication

### **Summary of Findings:**

#### **Survey of Latino Attitudes on the War with Iraq**

##### **Conducted April 3 to 6, 2003, Following Invasion of Iraq**

The Hispanic population is divided over the war with Iraq. Latinos born in the United States express strong support as well as optimism over its course thus far while the foreign born voice more cautious views and greater concern over the potential for terrorist attacks and economic losses, according to a Pew Hispanic Center poll of Latino adults taken April 3 to 6, 2003. This survey shows that support for the war is considerably higher among all Latinos as U.S. troops take the fight to Baghdad than in a similar survey taken in mid-February when the prospect of war was being debated at the United Nations.

Three-quarters of U.S.-born Hispanics now say they support the war and about one-fifth say they are opposed, which is comparable to the split found in several polls of the general public taken since combat began. Meanwhile, about half of foreign-born Latinos express support while a third are opposed. Among the foreign born, support was highest among those who have become U.S. citizens, and it was lowest among the most recently arrived immigrants. A significant split is also evident along gender lines with females considerably less supportive of the war than males. Nearly half (49 percent) of U.S.-born Latinos say the war is going "very well" compared to a little more than a third (35 percent) of the foreign born.

The nationwide telephone poll was conducted with 500 adults and has a margin of error of 4 percent. The sample was nationally representative of the Latino adult population in terms of gender, age, education, national origins and region. Bendixen & Associates, a Miami-based public opinion research firm specializing in the Latino population, conducted the poll with interviews both in English and Spanish.

The Hispanic population as a whole shares views on a number of points. Substantial majorities of both U.S.-born (72 percent) and foreign-born (86 percent) Latinos say that it is "very important" for U.S. military forces to do "everything possible" to avoid Iraqi civilian casualties. A majority of Latinos across the board (80 percent) also says that the war is more likely to last several months rather than a few weeks. When asked whether they have a clear idea about why the war is being fought, large majorities of both the U.S. born (77 percent) and foreign born (66 percent) answer "yes," they do know what the war is about. And, President George W. Bush draws high ratings across the board with 72 percent of U.S.-born and 64 percent of foreign-born Latinos saying he is doing an "excellent" or "good" job in handling the war. These positive ratings are comparable to those the President received in recent surveys of the general public.

However, significant differences emerge between the U.S. born and the foreign born on several perceptions of the war and its consequences. For example, 62 percent of foreign-born Latinos who have lived in the United States for less than 10 years say they have “a great deal of concern” that the war will have a negative economic impact on them or their families. The share of the U.S. born expressing such fears was not insignificant (34 percent), but it was much lower. In the Pew Hispanic Center survey taken in February, 72 percent of the foreign born residing here less than a decade expressed the same concern along with 58 percent of the U.S. born. On this point as well several others, the broad trend appears to be that U.S.-born Latinos have shed their concerns and rallied around the war effort over the past two months considerably more than the foreign born.

The sharpest point of disagreement between supporters and opponents of the war is over its impact on the potential for further terrorist attacks against the United States. A majority of Latinos express some concern that the war has made them feel less safe because it might provoke more terrorist attacks on the United States while a minority say they feel safer because action has been taken against terrorists. Among Latinos who say they oppose the war 76 percent say they feel less safe compared to 28 percent of those who support the war. The split on this question is less dramatic between the U.S. born (36 percent feel less safe) and the foreign born (52 percent) although the fear is notably higher among immigrants who have resided in the United States for less than ten years (66 percent). A 43 percent share of U.S.-born Latinos say they feel safer because of the war. That view did not draw a majority in any demographic segment of the Latino population.

The survey offers some indications of how the media might help shape views of the war. For example, an overwhelming majority of Latinos who get their news from English-language television say that the war is going “very well” for the United States (52 percent) or “fairly well” (34 percent). Among those who say they get their news from Spanish-language television, 34 percent take the most optimistic view and 25 percent the somewhat optimistic view. Similarly, 43 percent of Latinos watching Spanish-language TV news believe there have been too many Hispanic casualties in Iraq compared to 30 percent of those who watch TV news in English.

Latino immigrants are only moderately supportive of Latin American governments that have opposed U.S. action in Iraq with 47 percent of the foreign born saying that such opposition is right compared to 31 percent of the U.S. born. Among Hispanics born in Mexico 52 percent back Latin American opposition to the war while 30 percent say such opposition is wrong. This differs starkly with the results of public opinion polls in Mexico. A survey taken March 29 by Grupo Reforma, publishers of a major Mexico City newspaper, found that 88 percent of the Mexican public approved of President Vicente Fox’s statements against the war. By other measures as well Latino immigrants in the United States are far more supportive of the war than their relatives and compatriots back home. For example, 47 percent of Latinos born in Mexico and living in the United States support the war compared to only 7 percent of Mexicans in the Grupo Reforma survey.

Finally, fears of harassment by police and immigration authorities on a heightened terrorism alert have subsided somewhat but still remain substantial among foreign-born Latinos. In this survey 50 percent of the foreign born said they had “a great deal of concern” about such harassment compared to 64 percent in the poll taken in February.

Results from the April 2003 Pew Hispanic Center poll on attitudes towards the war with Iraq and comparable results from the February 2003 poll and from recent national surveys of the general public:

Do you support or oppose the United States war with Iraq?											
	Total Latino	US born	US born- <i>Feb</i>	Forn Born	Forn born- <i>Feb</i>	Mex. Born	<10yrs in US	Male	Female	Gallup/CNN USAT <i>Feb</i>	Gallup/CNN USAT 3/29-30
Support	61	75	52	52	46	47	37	71	52	63	70
Oppose	27	19	39	33	44	35	44	20	33	34	27
DK/NA	12	6	10	16	10	17	20	8	15	--	3

How would you rate the job that George W. Bush is doing on the war with Iraq?			
	Total Latino	US born	Foreign born
Excellent	24	30	19
Good	44	42	45
Mediocre	11	15	8
Poor	15	11	18
DK/NA	6	2	10

Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the situation with Iraq?		
	Gallup/CNN/USA Today March 29-30	FOX News March 25-26
Approve	71	69
Disapprove	27	23
DK/NA	2	8

Do you feel that you have a clear idea of what this war is all about—that is what we are fighting for?					
	Total Latino	US born	Foreign born	English TV News	Spanish TV News
Yes	71	77	66	79	59
No	26	21	31	20	37
DK/NA	3	2	3	1	4

How important is it for US military forces to do everything possible to avoid casualties among Iraqi civilians?					
	Total Latino	US Born	Foreign Born	Support war	Oppose war
Very important	80	72	86	79	80
Somewhat important	15	23	9	17	12
Not important at all	3	4	2	2	4
DK/NA	2	1	3	2	4

How soon do you think the war will be over?						
	Total Latino	US born	Foreign born	Support war	Oppose war	CBS 4/2-3
Few weeks	30	28	31	33	26	33
Several months	56	59	53	54	61	60
DK/NA	14	12	15	12	13	--

In your opinion, how do you think the war with Iraq has gone so far for the United States and its allies?									
	Total Latino	US born	Foreign born	English TV news	Spanish TV News	Support war	Oppose war	Gallup 3/29-30	CBS/NY T 3/26-27
Very well	41	49	35	52	34	53	22	33	34
Fairly well	30	33	27	34	25	33	24	52	51
Not too well	18	11	23	9	26	10	32	14	12
Not well at all	5	4	6	3	6	2	14		
DK/NA	6	2	8	3	9	2	8	1	3

Some people feel safer now that we have gone to war with Iraq because action has been taken against terrorists. Other people feel less safe now that we have gone to war with Iraq because it may provoke more terrorist attacks in the United States. Do you feel safer or less safe now that we have gone to war with Iraq?

	Total Latino	US born	Foreign born	Support war	Oppose war	FOX 3/25-26
Safer	37	43	32	52	10	48
Less Safe	45	36	52	28	76	34
Both/mixed feelings	13	14	12	15	8	10
DK/NA	5	7	3	4	6	8

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: There have been too many Hispanic casualties of war in Iraq

	Total Latino	US born	Foreign born	English TV	Spanish TV
Agree	36	28	42	30	43
Disagree	46	51	43	49	43
DK/NA	18	21	15	21	15

How much concern do you have that the country will experience difficult economic time that will have a negative impact on you and your family because of the war with Iraq?

	Total Latino	US born	US born Feb	Foreign born	Foreign born Feb	<10 years in US	20 year+ in US
Great deal of concern	45	34	58	53	71	62	51
Some concern	39	49	32	32	24	32	28
Not concerned at all	15	17	8	14	5	6	18
DK/NA	1	--	1	1	1	--	2

Now that the US authorities are on high alert because of the war with Iraq, how concerned are you that the immigration authorities and the police would harass immigrants and Latinos only because of the color of their skin?					
	Total Latino	US born	US born <i>Feb</i>	Foreign born	Foreign born <i>Feb</i>
Great deal of concern	37	19	30	50	64
Some concern	29	33	27	26	22
Not concerned at all	33	47	39	22	12
DK/NA	2	1	4	3	1

Do you think that most Latin American countries are right or wrong in opposing the United States in its war with Iraq?					
	Total Latino	US born	Foreign born	Mexico born	Born other countries
Right	40	31	47	52	41
Wrong	43	52	36	30	42
DK/NA	17	17	18	18	17

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Sample Characteristics

Total Sample: 500 Hispanic adults, 18 years of age or older

Interview language:

English 44%

Spanish 56%

Age: half under 40 years old, half over 40 years old

Education:

less than HS 29%

HS degree 26%

some college 11%

two or four year college degree 27%

graduate degree or more 7%

Source of information on the war:

English TV 38%

Spanish TV 41%

radio 6%

English newspapers 7%

Spanish newspapers 1%

the internet 5%

Country of birth:

United States 42%

Mexico 31%

Puerto Rico 5%

Cuba 5%

Dominican

Republic 3%

South

America 7%

Central

America 5%

Spain 1%

Other 1%